

# The Priority of Christ -- - Part 2

by Tom Wells

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*The sermon explores the authority of Christ and the implications of the Great Commission for Christians today.*

**Duration:** 51:41

**Scripture:** Daniel 7:14, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 28:16, Matthew 28:18-20

**Topics:** "Christ's Authority", "Great Commission"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the authority of Jesus Christ and the program he has set in motion to spread the gospel, bring in his elect, benefit the church, and judge the world. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus has all authority to carry out this program and gives two commands to his disciples: to go and make disciples, and to teach them to obey his commands. The speaker also highlights how Jesus creates the conditions for spreading the gospel, citing examples such as his encounter with Paul on the road to Emmaus. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as the chief agent for revealing God's will and character.

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## Transcript

I just ran back to the room where I'm staying and shaved. I didn't have the excuse that Doug Moo had of my barber, so I decided that I'd better... I came back and here we are together. I want to ask you to turn with me to two passages this afternoon, one of them from Daniel chapter 7, where I will read a very familiar passage, just verses 13 through 15, and then after that we will look in the New Testament.

While we're finding the passages, let me just say, pray very much for the Providence Theological, what was the Theological Institute and is now to be the seminary, very difficult to establish a school in Texas. I think this is ringing slightly, am I wrong about that? Yeah, that'll be better. I always tell the people that do the sound that I like as much sound as possible, because I tend to drop my voice at the end.

When I do that, of course, people don't know what I'm saying. There'll be a certain number of people in the room who really do want to know what I'm saying at the end of time, so it helps to have lots of voice. Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 through 15.

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All people's nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Even though, of course, that comes from the Old Testament, it is a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's never been another person, never will be one that fits that passage so wonderfully well. Now in the New Testament, I'd ask you to turn with me to Matthew 28. I just want to read the very, very familiar passage that we know together as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28, starting at verse 16. Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.

Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

We'll stop our reading there at what is obviously the end of the chapter and the end of the Gospel of Matthew. Now very quickly, by way of review, I'll remind you that I have been telling you that Jesus Christ is the chief agent which God has for revealing what God is like. And that is very important for us.

It includes God's will, it includes God's character, everything that God wants to reveal to humans, he reveals, or virtually everything, through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you ask a question, where can I see God best? I suggested that it's suicidal not to answer that question. If you answer it, you must answer it by saying, In the Lord Jesus Christ, God is best revealed.

And I closed my message yesterday by calling your attention to something that you are already very familiar with, and that was the transfiguration in which Peter is trying to allot the glory of the transfiguration to the various figures who are there, the Lord Jesus and Elijah and Moses. And a cloud comes over Peter and a voice comes out of the cloud, obviously the voice of God, and says, You are my beloved son. Or, let's see, yes, I get my vows and you's mixed up.

And then the voice says, Hear him. And I made the point, I think, that Jesus didn't say anything right after that. And the conclusion that I drew from that was that it wasn't a statement about what Jesus was going to say next.

Someone might say, Hear Tom Wells, and I might have something worth saying immediately after that. It might be debatable, but we won't go into that. But if I said nothing, I probably would simply be missing the point they were making.

But when Peter was told to listen to the Lord Jesus Christ, as I suggested, it wasn't that he was to listen to that which Jesus said next, although obviously that would be true, but he is saying, This is the one to whom you must listen for the rest of your life and for the rest of eternity even. This is my beloved son. Hear him.

And so, Jesus Christ is the agent whom God has selected to reveal his character, his will, his purposes. And I remind you again what agents do. Agents represent somebody else.

And the Lord Jesus Christ is representing nothing less than the triune God sent by the Father. You remember the Lord Jesus makes that point a number of times. I came into the world to do this, that, or the

other.

My Father sent me. And later on when he appoints some apostles, he says to them, As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. So the Lord Jesus is very, very conscious of the fact that he was the agent of God.

And when we turn to the pages of the New Testament, we find that emphasized in other ways. The very beginning of the book of Acts, we didn't look at that and we won't look at it now, but you remember that Luke says in writing the book of Acts that in the earlier book, that would be what we call the Gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus Christ is represented as beginning to do and to carry on some things and some work. But now Theophilus, I'm going to go beyond what Jesus began to do in his lifetime and I'm going to expound to you what he does from now on.

And even though there are places in the book of Acts where it looks as if the Spirit of God is communicating directly to people, and there are such places, it's also true that at the very beginning of the book of Acts, it is made plain that because Jesus is Lord and Christ, the Holy Spirit is come. In fact, Peter says in his sermon on Pentecost, God has made this same Jesus Lord Christ and he has poured out what you've seen and what he poured out, of course, were the gifts and the work of the Spirit. And so all through the book of Acts, that's what's going on.

The Apostle Paul is run down by the Lord Jesus as he's on the road to Damascus and he hears a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he says, who art thou Lord? He didn't know who he was. The word Lord there is used probably as an address of honor to anyone. Who are you Lord? I am Jesus whom you're persecuting, but rise, get up on your feet, go into the city, there will be told you what you must do.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ intervenes all through the book of Acts. Now in the passages that I've called your attention to this afternoon, we see the Lord Jesus Christ laying out his program. We're taking a look this afternoon at the program of the Lord Jesus and we won't have much to say about verses 16 and 17.

The only thing perhaps that I would say about those is that they're kind of an introduction to the rest of it, but also there is one very interesting statement where we read in verse 17, when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And I've always been grateful that that statement, some doubted, was in there for the simple reason that if it really means doubt, it's conceivable that it means some hesitated for one reason or another to go forward. But if it really means doubted, it is clear that we're having an eyewitness account here, not necessarily by Matthew, although it could well be, but somebody saw that when people came to the Lord Jesus Christ and he gave what we call the Great Commission, somebody saw that there were some who doubted and that shows that there was eyewitness evidence because I don't think anybody making up this story would have stuck that in.

It is simply the fact that some doubted, whatever that may mean, and some others saw it and were impressed by it. In this 45 minutes or so that we have, I want to look at three things. First of all, the present status of the Lord Jesus as it is revealed in this passage.

And then I want to talk to you about the program that the Lord Jesus Christ has for the world and then finally we'll talk a little bit about how we Christians must live in light of that program. The present status of the Lord Jesus, we find it in verse 18, Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Now, I take it that the passage that we read from the book of Daniel, chapter

7, says very much the same thing as that verse 18 in Matthew 28.

If you remember that passage in Daniel, it talks about his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. And while words like power and glory and sovereign power and so on are in there, I call your attention particularly to the word dominion because that's the same word in the Septuagint that is translated authority here. The Lord Jesus Christ has a dominion or authority.

We talk about the kingdom of Christ and he is asserting that authority as we come into what we've come to call the Great Commission. Now that authority that the Lord Jesus has is of course closely related to the other things that he will say in the following verses. But I want to suggest some things that are implied in Jesus talking about his authority before we actually look at his authoritative commands.

I want to suggest to you that there are four things that are included in the authority of the Lord Jesus that are particularly relevant to us today. First of all, the Lord Jesus Christ has the authority to create the conditions for the spread of the gospel. Who does that? The Lord Jesus does it because he has all authority.

Secondly, he has authority to bring in his elect. And thirdly, he has authority to benefit the church. And fourthly, he has authority to judge the world.

And I want to just call your attention to a few passages and ideas that say those very things. Let's think, for instance, of his authority to create conditions to spread the gospel. Well, to begin with, that's what he's doing here.

He's informing his disciples that this is the way you need to act and these are the things that you ought to do. And that's what he was doing again when he knocked down Paul on the road to Emmaus. He was creating the conditions to get the gospel out and Paul becomes one of the greatest gospel ministers of all church history.

I was thinking and telling somebody, I think, this week about how I came to my vision for missions. You know that I've written a book by that title, but that title fits here. The Lord Jesus did some things with me to set me up to be tremendously interested in missions.

And those of you who may have been to our church will realize that that is a major thrust of our church. We had some missionaries come in one time and they said, now all you need to complete this is to have some maps of the world around here. They said that tongue-in-cheek because we've got maps of the world all over our auditorium in order to remind us to be interested in getting the gospel to the ends of the earth.

When I was a young man, back in 1954, I went to Europe as a short-term missionary with Youth for Christ. We were laboring in Germany. I was in a quartet.

We conducted tent meetings. We had a German evangelist and we sang in German. All of our singing was in German, except I think that we did, on occasion, Negro spiritual in English, but otherwise all of our singing was in German.

But one of the things that struck me in Germany when I was there was the paucity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, how little there was. And particularly in the small towns, you would never go into a small town and

find an evangelical church. What you would find would be a kind of sisterhood, something like we would call nuns if they had been connected with a Roman Catholic church, but they were connected with the Reformed and with the Lutheran churches and they were evangelicals.

And they would set up meetings for us. We had the privilege of speaking to four, five, six hundred people. There weren't a lot of things to do in a German village in those days.

And then we had the privilege of going on Sunday morning to the local church and listen to the pastor denounce us from the pulpit. But many people came to Jesus Christ through those women, older women, and I thank God for them. But I was struck with a darkness.

And the same thing, I wasn't in France very much, but going across into France was darkness. And we take for granted that there would be a church that is evangelical on almost every corner in our major cities and they just didn't have that. And so I came back, well to begin with, I didn't plan to come back.

When the rest of the quartet left, I stayed in Germany, but it was in the days when your draft board told you what you could and could not do and it wasn't very long before I got a letter from my draft board which told me that I had to come back to the United States. And so I was not able to stay there. But you will see what happened there was that the Lord Jesus Christ sent me out, not anyone special, just me and a few other people, and he gave us a vision for the darkness of the world.

And from that time forward I was determined to do everything I could do to get the gospel and the ends of the earth by supporting, praying for, doing anything that I could to get missionaries out. And if you ask why that happened, well it happened in the providence of Jesus Christ. We often speak about the providence of God, but the providence of God is in the hands of one who has all authority in heaven and earth, and therefore we are talking about the providence of Jesus Christ.

And the Bible tells us that he opens the doors and no man shuts them, and therefore that's the reason you heard the gospel, because Jesus opened the door and nobody shut it. Now of course it's obvious that right conditions are not all that is needed, and so the second thing that I would say to you is that the Lord Jesus has the authority to bring in God's elect. And I will read to you a verse that again you're familiar with from John chapter 17, in which the Lord Jesus is in prayer and he says this, Father, the time has come, glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you, for you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

What is Jesus saying? He's saying, Father, you've given me the privilege and the authority to bring in your elect, and he's been doing that ever since. I had a note here to tell you a bit about my conversion, which was a pretty remarkable set of circumstances, but I don't think the time will allow for that. Let me just move on.

The third thing that the Lord Jesus Christ has authority to do is to benefit the church. And over in Ephesians chapter 1, if you would like to turn there, let me read to you from the middle of verse 19 through the end of the chapter. Ephesians chapter 1, and I will give you time to find it.

Let me tell you one of my pet peeves. The preachers who say, turn to such and such, they've already found it, and while you're starting to thumb through your Bible, they're reading it to you, and you don't hear what they're saying because you're looking for the passage. And I just, I get upset over that.

So I will give you time to find Ephesians chapter 1. Do you have it? Ephesians chapter 1, starting in the middle of verse 19. God's power is like the working of His mighty strength which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Now that is great power.

That's God's power being described here. And seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. So, Paul is telling Ephesians that Jesus Christ has so much power that He has power over all the other things that you can name as power.

With the exception, of course, of His Father. Verse 22, God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. Interesting to read the commentators, they usually land on to the church, which wouldn't really mean a great deal of difference.

But if you look through the translations, they almost all say for the church. You may have one that doesn't, but that will be an exception. So, Paul is saying to the people to whom he is writing, the reason Jesus Christ has this authority, I should say a reason, is in order that He might benefit the church with it.

And He didn't just reel us in, you see, like a fisherman might do, and lay us aside and go look for more fish. It is true that He brings in a lot of fish in the course of this world, but He does it in order to benefit the fish. Any of you fishermen do that? Some do, I suppose.

Those who get fish and put a little clamp so they can be traced to find out where they are migrating and so on and so forth. But the great majority of fishermen don't fish for the fish, for the fish's sake, but for their own sake. Now finally, and again I won't have you turn here, but you'll remember that in the fourth place, the Lord Jesus Christ has the authority to judge the world.

And if we had time, we could turn to Acts chapter 17, where Paul is on Mars Hill and he is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, or at least preparing to do that by laying a groundwork for the character of God. And he winds up, didn't intend I take it to wind up here, but he winds up saying, and God has given authority to a man in order to judge the entire world, that man is Jesus Christ. And in this case the meeting broke up because they didn't want to hear this.

So, the authority of the Lord Jesus is exercised to create the conditions to spread the gospel, to bring in his elect, to benefit the church, and finally to judge the world. Now in verses 19 and the beginning of verse 20, we have the program that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to run as he does this. And so let me read to you 19, the first part of verse 20, and then we'll talk about that.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Now you know the old chestnut about where you see a therefore, see what it's there for. And in this case, of course, it means that because I have authority, I can carry out this program, or you can carry it out because I have authority to give it to you.

And basically it has two commands. It has a command, first of all, for us to go and to make disciples. And then, of course, it has the implicit command that those to whom we go must respond.

They won't all do so, of course, as we well know. But the implicit command to all men is to respond to the gospel, and the command to the church is to carry the gospel out and to make disciples. When we read

this, it looks as if he's telling us to do three different things.

First, go and make disciples of all nations. Secondly, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, to teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.

I say it looks as if that's a three-pronged program. I'm going to suggest to you this afternoon that it's not a three-pronged program at all, but it's a single program in which the Lord Jesus Christ says the same thing three ways. Let's start with the statement, Therefore, go unto all the world and make disciples of all nations.

What is a disciple? Well, if you were to look the word disciple up in the dictionary, you would find that it means something like a student, a learner, a disciple is somebody who sits at the feet, figuratively or literally, and is taught. And Jesus is saying, therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. But while those dictionary definitions are correct, one of the things that you soon learn when you're studying English and the Bible and any literature is that words mean all kinds of things depending upon their context.

And it is frequently true, it can frequently be said that words have no meaning apart from a context because the meanings are so varied and so many that unless you have a context, you don't know how the word's being used. I looked up in my desk dictionary, the dictionary at my desk at home, which is one about that thick. It's not one of these huge ones, and it's not, of course, a child's dictionary.

But I looked up the word cut. And how many definitions do you suppose that I found for the word cut in that dictionary? Ninety-one definitions. So when you see the word cut outside of a context, you have no idea what it's talking about.

I mean, something will come to your mind, but you've got one chance of ninety-one of it being what has come to your mind, you see. And so words have many meanings, and the more common the word is, the more meanings it has. So let me, having laid that groundwork, talk to you about the word disciple.

Disciple means a student, a learner, yes, but it has a little nuance of its own. Suppose, for instance, in a university nearby, I said to you that there are two professors who are experts on Karl Marx. You can tell I'm old, or I wouldn't be using that illustration, but for the purposes of illustrating, it's all right.

These two men are experts on Karl Marx. And then I said to you, one of them is a student of Karl Marx, and the other is a disciple of Karl Marx. Now you would immediately pick up on the difference.

The first man has a tremendous amount of information about Karl Marx. He could talk about him weeks, months, and years perhaps, and expound his writings to you, and so on and so forth. But the word student is a neutral word.

You don't know whether he likes Karl Marx or he doesn't like Karl Marx. Are you with me? Okay. But if we say the other man is a disciple of Karl Marx, we've said something far more than that.

He knows a lot about Karl Marx. We're saying that he is a follower of Karl Marx. And as you know, serious followers of Karl Marx would be people who often risk their lives for the particular loyalty that they have, not perhaps in the university, but in many parts of the world.

Now Jesus said, I want you to go and not make students, but to make disciples. That is the business of the Church of Jesus Christ. That's the first thing that Jesus says when he talks about his programs, because a

disciple will be somebody who is prepared to follow the Lord Jesus Christ wherever he goes.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, Jesus said. And a student of Jesus Christ may or may not be willing to do that, but a disciple of Jesus Christ will follow him to the death. Now the second thing he says is, having made these disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now the thing that strikes me about that is, that's another way of saying make them disciples. Now let me back that up with a little bit of scripture at least. Remember over in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, that the Apostle Paul is talking about the Israelites coming out of Egypt, and he speaks of them as having been baptized into Moses.

Remember that passage? Baptized into Moses. What does that mean? Well it means that they came under the authority of Moses. On one side of the Red Sea they were under the authority of Pharaoh, on the other side of the Red Sea they were under the authority of Moses.

And when people kicked against Moses' authority, God saw to it that those people were punished. They were baptized into Moses. They came under Moses' authority.

They were Moses' disciples. And I think it would be fair to say that when we look in the New Testament, 1400 years later, we see a lot of people who claim to be Moses' disciples. And they are the descendants of those who came out of Egypt and followed Moses.

So when the Lord Jesus Christ says, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit, he's saying make them disciples. Make those people who come under the authority of the Triune God, of whom, of course, he is the visible representation. Now we can go a step further.

The last thing Jesus says is, teaching them, verse 20, to obey everything I have commanded you. Remember the distinction between a student and a disciple? A student may know everything that Jesus commanded him and not do any of it. But a disciple is a person who does what Jesus says.

And that's what Jesus says here. You teach them to keep everything that I've commanded you. And in saying that, he's saying, make them my disciples.

How do you do that? Well, you make them those who follow the Lord Jesus, who are baptized and thus come under the authority of the Lord Jesus, and who do what Jesus says. So that's what a program, that is the program of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in the book that I've written called The Priority of Jesus Christ, the very last chapter, I have a chapter on how we must live, and so I want to conclude this afternoon by talking a bit about how we Christians must live.

Because I gave you something at the beginning of the book and something at the end and in between, of course, I had to leave many things out. But what is it that we must do as Christians? Or to put it another way, what are the commands that Jesus gives? You remember in the Old Testament it said the people of Israel had to follow all the commands which God gave through Moses. And now we have to keep all the commands that God has given us through Jesus Christ.

And that is what many of us have come to call the Law of Christ. The Law of Christ. Not the Law of Moses, but the Law of Christ.

Now in the New Testament there isn't a great deal of explanation about the meaning of that phrase, the Law of Christ. It appears in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 2 where we are told to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ. And if we look around in that passage we are likely to see some clues or hints as to what is being talked about.

But some would say to us, you know, there is no such group of commandments in the New Testament such as we have in the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. So displacing the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament with the Law of Christ, you have to make a big leap. But I think we can see that that is not the case for the simple reason that the New Testament is loaded with commands.

There are commands all over the New Testament that are directed to us over and over and over again and it is not unreasonable to put that name upon them, the Law of Christ. And the Apostle Paul also in writing to the Corinthians says that while he is no longer under the Mosaic Law he is in law to Christ, which I take means that he is under the Law of Jesus Christ. So let's see if we can understand in the time we have left what we might have to talk about here.

I'm going to suggest that in the New Testament there are five things, there are more probably, but I'm going to suggest to you five things that may be called the Law of Christ. First of all, the Law of Christ is the character of Christ himself as he reveals the character of God. One of the themes that comes up repeatedly in the New Testament is the theme of family likeness.

Somebody has already made the point, I don't remember who it was, but somebody has already made the point that we are not natural sons of God, but we are adopted sons of God. And if you have an adopted son, of course, one of the things you can't count on is that he will just be like everybody else in the family, but you try to create and instill in him the family likeness. And the Lord Jesus Christ came to display the family likeness.

He says that I only do the things that my father tells me to do. I say the things which my father wants me to say. And in saying that, he is pushing family likeness.

Now, that's what the New Testament is telling us to do. We must have the family likeness. How are we going to know what the family likeness is? Well, one way we come to know it is by looking at Jesus Christ, who is the best revelation of what God is about.

Some years ago, I don't know if this is still true, but ten years ago, let's say, if you stopped in a truck stop on the way somewhere, you would see all of these buttons and different things that had on them, WWJD. WWJD. And what did that stand for? Tell me.

What would Jesus do? Now, I have friends who took exception to that, and their exception is well-grounded in one respect, and that is, of course, we're going to talk about what would Jesus do? You have to know something about Jesus. And great numbers of people wore those buttons around who knew, I take it, little or nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so they were inventing out of their minds what Jesus would do, and then they would go and maybe do that or maybe buy another button and throw that one away.

I don't know. But the idea itself is a good one. What would Jesus do under these circumstances? Now, if you don't have any clue to the answer to that question, then you have to exercise your own judgment.

But if we go through the Bible from beginning to end, and particularly in the New Testament, we'll see more and more of what God is like in the person of the Lord Jesus, and we'll better be able to answer the question, then what would Jesus do? And so I would say that that's one of the first components of what we would call the law of Christ. Now, in the second place, there are implicit commands and implicit law in the ideal descriptions of Christians that we meet in the New Testament. Now, let me explain what I mean by that.

It really comes out two ways. First of all, let's say in Matthew chapter 5, you remember at the beginning we have the Beatitudes. Blessed is the man who is like this, and blessed is the man who is like that, and blessed is the man who is like that, meek and poor in spirit, and so on and so forth.

All of those are ideal descriptions of the Christian, but as ideal descriptions of the Christian, they're the goals toward which we must be pressing all the time. We're not supposed to read those and say, that's pretty. I think I'll write a song about that.

Maybe it could be whistled in church next Sunday morning. No, of course not. When we read those ideal descriptions of Christians, we're to say to ourselves, that's what I'm to be like.

Now, that's one way ideal descriptions come up. Another way is in the epistles, particularly of Paul, in which he says to us something like this, not in these words, but he says something like this, become what you are. He gives a terrific description of what a Christian is and how he's free from sin, and so on and so forth, and then he says, get rid of sin.

And he sometimes specifies which ones are to be dropped and which ones are not, and what is he doing there? Well, he's starting with an ideal Christian painting, as it were, a description of the Christian, and he's saying, set that as a goal before you. Don't take your eyes off of it. You be like that.

Now, in the third place, the explicit commands of the Lord Jesus, of course, are his law. The Sermon on the Mount, we get various ones. He says, for instance, that you've read in old time that you must not commit adultery.

The man who looks upon a woman too lust after her has committed adultery already as hard, and the command, of course, that Jesus is giving us is you must not do that. You must not look at women to lust after them. You must not do that.

And the Sermon on the Mount is filled with all kinds of laws set down by the Lord Jesus Christ. All right. His character, as the best view of God, is one of these ways that we know the law of Christ.

His implicit law in the ideal descriptions of Christians, the explicit commands such as in the Sermon on the Mount, and then the demands in the fourth place of his agents, the writers and the apostles. And if you go through the epistles, they're just full of things that we're told. And most of those things have to do with the heart.

Now, I'm very aware of the fact that under the Mosaic law there were lots of things directed at the heart. But as a percentage, the overwhelming number were directed at the activity because that was national law and a mixed multitude. And a mixed multitude cannot have a right heart, but they can keep from murdering or lying in court or other things.

But when we come to the New Testament, it's different. Now we're meeting commands like humility, patience, love, and on and on, over and over again. And they're not coming now from the lips of the Lord Jesus directly, but they're coming from his agents.

And if we had time, we could explore the various ways in which the writers of the New Testament show themselves to be the agents of the Lord Jesus. If any man thinks he's spiritual, Paul says, let him do what I'm saying here in the end of 1 Corinthians. Finally, and in fifth place, and perhaps most of all, the two love commandments, taken from the Old Testament, to be sure, but they do not have the place in the Old Testament that they have in the New.

They're taken from two different passages, the one about love to your neighbor, relatively obscure spot, but when we come to the New Testament, we're told over and over and over again, you must love. You must love. I've often said, it may be a hyperbole, a deliberate exaggeration, but I've often said that when I began to preach years and years ago, there were two subjects that we didn't talk about.

One was the humanity of Christ, and the second was love. You say, that can't be, Tom. We hear about love all the time.

Yes, but those were the things the liberals were preaching about in those days, and the Church of Jesus Christ in fundamentalism almost lost any view of the humanity of Jesus Christ, which is as tremendously important for us as the deity. And we didn't talk about love because the liberals were talking about love all the time. Now, we need a definition for love so we know what we're talking about.

Let me give you one. To love someone is to seek their benefit, or to seek to promote their interest. To seek their benefit, or to seek to promote their interest.

And the reason I have two parts to that definition is because we have to cover love to both God and man, and we can't do anything to benefit God. He's absolutely self-sufficient, has everything that he needs, and if we were to give him something, it would only be something that he'd given us. But that's what love means, to promote the interest of someone, or to seek their benefit.

And that is the command of Christ. And when we look in the context of Galatians chapter 6, bury one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ, one of the things that's very prominent in that context is we must love one another as Christ loved the church. Now, the program that I've laid out for you has either three elements or one, depending on how you look at it, to make disciples of all nations, to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to do all the commands of Christ.

Now let me ask you a question. Don't answer it, but let me ask you the question. Will this program succeed or fail? And from what I've said thus far, we don't know whether it will or not.

It's like three volumes that are between two bookends. And if you can imagine these bookends pushing together one volume that says make disciples, and another volume which says baptize them, and another volume which says teach them to do the commands of Christ. If you can imagine that as three volumes, then imagine these bookends, which are tremendously important, and the first one is all authority is given to me in heaven and on earth.

If all authority is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is the possibility that this program may be successfully carried out. But we also need the other bookend, without which the first one is of no use. And that other bookend is found in the last verse of this chapter.

And surely I'm with you always to the very end of the age. Now what's Jesus saying? His authority without His presence would mean nothing in this program. His presence without His authority would lead to frustration on the part of all who try to engage in this program.

But because the Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, and He gives this relatively short, simple program with enormous, of course, implications, because He puts the bookends around it of His authority and His presence, that program will succeed. I had lunch today with Greg Barkman and I thought about having made a statement like that in his church many years ago at a missions conference. And it had one bad result, so I want to clear that up as much as possible.

I say it had a bad result because there was a young man there who was a missionary somewhere in South America, and I said the program of Jesus Christ is bound to succeed, and he'd seen very little success and concluded that he was not called to be a missionary. And I hated that for the simple reason that that success that Jesus promises will be seen over the course of history at different times and different places. We look at Western Europe, as I suggested a little bit ago, and Western Europe was just as dark as it could be, and you couldn't see the success of the gospel.

But today, while Western Europe still lies in darkness, the greatest revival that has ever come to humanity is going on in the nation of China, and today China has more evangelical, serious evangelical Christians than any other nation in the world. And that is a mark. So it's not that I'll succeed, or you'll succeed.

It is that Jesus Christ will succeed with his program. And so what is our business? Is our business to be successful? No. Our business is to be faithful.

And as God enables us to make disciples, to baptize them, to teach them to do what Christ commands, and if Christ hasn't commanded anything, there's nothing to tell them to do, but there is a law of Christ which is contained in those elements that I've mentioned to you today. So may God enable us to do this for his glory. Let's pray together.

Thank you, Father, for the privilege of speaking about the authority of Christ, and for the privilege of having his presence. We have it when we feel it, as it were, and we have it when we don't feel it, if we are members of the church of Jesus Christ is alive. Help us, Father, to carry out his law, and to please him, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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